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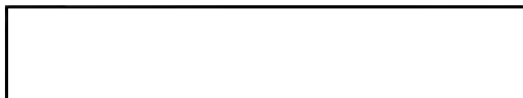


DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

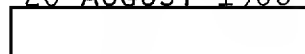
RECENT ACTIVITIES IN NORTH VIETNAM  
(12-18 AUGUST 1968)

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20 AUGUST 1968



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
20 August 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Recent Activities in North Vietnam  
(12-18 August 1968)

Summary

North Vietnam continued to expand and diversify its military and logistics capabilities throughout the country, especially in the areas free of the bombing. A major transshipment point has been confirmed just north of the 19th Parallel. Bai Thuong Airfield has been partially paved in recent weeks, improving its all-weather capability. The Thanh Hoa powerplant is being repaired, the first sign of such activity south of the 20th Parallel since the bombing halt.

The North Vietnamese continue to repair additional rail bypass bridges along serviceable rail lines in the north, including some between Hanoi and Thanh Hoa, but, because of recent flooding, little progress was made on construction of the new rail line between Kep and the port of Hon Gai during the past month.

Most indicators of traffic movements in the Panhandle were down substantially from the level of recent weeks. [redacted] truck sightings and destructions were both down 50 percent from last week, in part due to poor weather. [redacted]

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*Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Economic Research and the Office of Current Intelligence and was coordinated with the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.*

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[redacted] Watercraft sightings remained high, even though well below the record levels set in July.

Seaborne imports in August will probably be at about the July level. Imports of foodstuffs are expected to remain high, as the "rice ration" has become increasingly dependent on wheat and other substitutes. The port of Haiphong remains congested, but cargo continues to move quickly through the port.

North Vietnamese MIG's flew south of the 19th Parallel for the first time in several days, but the only loss to either side was the apparent accidental downing of one US aircraft by friendly fire.

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South of the 20th Parallel

Industry

1. The first industrial reconstruction south of the 20th Parallel since the bombing limitation has been observed at the Thanh Hoa powerplant, located between the 19th and 20th Parallels.

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Reconstruction of the powerplant suggests that the North Vietnamese believe that there is a better than even chance that the informal 19th Parallel cutoff for US bombing will not be modified.

Logistics Facilities

2. The existence of an extensive rail-to-road transshipment area was confirmed for the first time at the intersection of Routes 1A and 7001, about one mile north of the 19th Parallel and about 30 miles north of Vinh (see the maps). The area consists of a 1,500-foot rail spur which extends west from the main line along Route 7001, another rail spur which parallels the main line south of the intersection of Routes 1A and 7001, several rail/road transshipment areas, and a locomotive turntable.

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3. The new transshipment point is probably the southern terminus of through rail service south of Thanh Hoa. The site, just north of the 19th Parallel, is free from air attack and is about two miles north of the bridges at Dien Chau, where constant attacks have rendered through rail traffic impossible since about mid-May. The new turntable was apparently installed to facilitate the turnaround of truck locomotives.

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4. The North Vietnamese rely on highway and water transport to move goods farther south, and the new transshipment area is well situated near key road and water routes. The Song Bang River, one mile east of the rail spur, connects with the Song Ca River at Vinh. Highway Route 1A, a major north-south highway, provides access to Routes 7, 71, and 15 for inland movements to Laos. Route 7001 extends in a southwesterly direction and meets Route 7 about 15 miles from the transshipment point. Truck traffic can then continue west on Route 7 to Laos or to Route 72, a major inland alternate to Route 1A for southbound movements. In addition, Route 7001 intersects Route 7 near Route 71, another key inland alternate to Route 1A. Several improvements along Route 71 and the construction of several new POL and ammunition storage areas along Route 72 [redacted]

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[redacted] Moreover, several southbound truck convoys have recently been sighted and attacked on these two routes, confirming their use for southbound logistic flow.

#### Truck Traffic

5. [redacted] Parallel dropped sharply this past week. Compared with both last week's sightings and the weekly sightings noted since 1 April, both the number of trucks sighted and the number reported destroyed or damaged decreased about 50 percent. The

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	<u>Sighted <sup>a/</sup></u>	<u>De- stroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>	<u>Total De- stroyed or Damaged</u>	<u>Effective Losses <sup>b/</sup></u>
This week <sup>c/</sup> (12-18 Aug)	378	69	45	114	63
Last week (5-11 Aug)	727	130	106	236	123
Weekly average (since 1 Apr)	710	118	82	200	108

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c. Preliminary data.

6. Truck sightings this week were limited to groups of three or less, with only a few moderate-sized truck convoys reported. The largest convoy, of about 30 trucks, [redacted] moving south over Route 72, several miles south of the junction of Routes 7 and 15 which is located near the 19th Parallel. At least 18 trucks in this convoy were reported destroyed or damaged. A convoy of similar size was sighted and attacked last week on Route 71, a parallel route to Route 72. These convoys were possibly associated with the large rail/highway transshipment and storage area recently confirmed just north of the 19th Parallel. Further south, several groups of 10 to 15 trucks were sighted inland on Routes 15, 101, and 110.

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Watercraft

7. [redacted] logistics craft during the past week increased over the previous week. Sightings were well above the weekly average since 1 April, but substantially below the record high of 1,280 sightings during the week of 22-28 July. Most of the sightings were on the Cua Sot, north of Ha Tinh, and at Quang Khe, Dong Hoi, and the coast south of Dong Hoi.

[redacted]

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Air Operations

9. North Vietnamese MIG's again flew south of the 19th Parallel after a few days' inactivity to attack US aircraft flying strikes in the southern Panhandle region.

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Four MIG-17's and possibly as many as six MIG-21's from Bai Thuong were involved in a dogfight on 18 August with two US Navy aircraft. One US aircraft was downed by an air-to-air missile, but it appears to have been fired by the accompanying Navy jet.

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10.

weather capability of Bai Thuong Airfield has been improved during the past month. The center 5,650-foot portion of the 7,850-foot runway has been

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North of the 20th ParallelRail

11. Repair of additional rail bypass bridges between Hanoi and Thanh Hoa

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even though this segment of the Hanoi-Vinh rail line is serviceable for through traffic and not subject to air attack. Repair of one bypass bridge at Dong Phong Thuong, near the 20th Parallel, has recently been completed, and repair of another is under way. An additional rail bypass bridge at Ninh Binh is also being repaired, although a pontoon rail bridge and three rail ferries are currently serviceable at Ninh Binh. However, no attempt has yet been made to repair the original bridge at either place. The bypass bridges apparently are being repaired so that rail service to Thanh Hoa will be less vulnerable to disruption in case of a resumption of air attacks in the area.

12. Construction of the new Kep-Hon Gai rail line continues, although little progress has been made during the past month because heavy rain flooded part of the roadbed. The railroad could

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be operational in early 1969. Nearly 90 percent of the roadbed has been prepared, 15 percent of the track has been laid, and 20 of the 43 bridges have been completed.

#### Foreign Trade and Aid

13. Seaborne imports during August will probably be slightly above the July level. Imports of foodstuffs probably will be at about the July level, which was greater than the monthly average for the first six months of 1968. Deliveries of foodstuffs from South China resumed in early August after a halt of almost two months. Petroleum imports in August are expected to remain well below the 1968 monthly average. Soviet ship arrivals, although low during the first half of the month, probably will approach the high July level. The number of Chinese arrivals is returning to normal after a cessation between 29 June and 16 July. Congestion at the port of Haiphong continued, with 26 ships in port in mid-August. However, ship offloading and movement of supplies from the port continued at high rates.

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#### Food

15. North Vietnam is placing greater reliance on secondary foods such as wheat flour, corn, sweet potatoes, and manioc to maintain the official "rice ration." Almost all reports now claim that 50 percent of the ration is made up of substitutes. The more extensive use of substitutes for rice apparently reflects the low yield of the fifth-month crop. The ration continues to range from about 13 kilograms per month for a sedentary adult up to 24 kilograms for a heavy laborer.

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